Interagency Wildfire Management Team
Meeting Notes
July 2, 2003

Diana Webb (Office of the Associate Director for Operations, LANL) noted that June 2003 marks the seven-year anniversary of the IWMT and recalled major accomplishments of the IWMT during these seven years. After the Dome Fire in 1996, a precursor to the IWMT was formed to facilitate collaboration and communication among local land management agencies on matters that pertain to wildfire. The initial organization was formed as a result of a meeting between Diana, Ed Nettles, Jim Gourdoux, Doug Tucker, John Lissoway, Robert Remillard, and Dave Bradbury. The IWMT soon became a permanent committee at LANL and has served the Los Alamos community during the Lummis Fire, the Oso Fire, and the Cerro Grande Fire. It has also assisted in conducting annual public meetings to address wildfire issues, upgrading fire roads and fire breaks, initiating the development of fuel breaks at LANL and in the Los Alamos townsite, and developing the fire cache and the helipad at TA-49. Through these and other collaborations an atmosphere of trust was developed that is essential for the successful interactions between diverse land management agencies during emergency situations.

Pat Valerio (Ecology Group, LANL) has been compiling baseline needs for future fire hazard reduction activities in the undeveloped areas at LANL.

Leslie Hansen (Ecology Group, LANL) has been coordinating efforts for the development of a Wildfire Hazard Reduction Plan for LANL. This plan will be in place by the end of September.

Phil Taylor (Office of Emergency Management, Los Alamos County) attended a meeting of the Radio Broadcasters Association in Albuquerque. The development of emergency notifications systems was a major topic of the meeting. Phil is currently developing a cost estimate of such a system at Los Alamos.

Todd Haagenstad (Ecology Group, LANL) is preparing an Institutional Wildfire Management Plan for LANL. This plan will focus on roles and responsibilities of various groups within LANL. This plan will also serve as a transition from the Cerro Grande Rehabilitation Project to long-term wildfire hazard reduction and management at LANL.

Rob Farris (Fire Protection Group, LANL) is preparing a baseline needs assessment for the protection of buildings and facilities at LANL from wildfire.

Randy Balice (Ecology Group, LANL) has completed the sampling at 23 permanent plots. These data and data from past years are being used to specify fuel load target criteria for selected ecosystems, evaluate current fuel loads within specified distances from buildings and facilities, and develop custom fuel models for piñon-juniper woodlands. These results will be used in the wildfire planning for LANL.

Ed Hoth (Utilities and Infrastructure, LANL) provides oversight for maintenance of roads, cutting of trees, and protection of utility corridors in undeveloped areas at LANL. Much of this work is conducted through contractors, such as KSL.

Jim Whittington (Bandelier National Monument) recently returned from wildfire duty in Arizona. Jim noted that trees that had been recently killed by drought and had not yet dropped their needles were observed to burn with high intensity. Jim also noted that, during the Aspen Fire, many homes in Summerhaven, Arizona, burned from ground fires without killing the neighboring trees. Although the Aspen Fire consumed a large portion of the Catalina Mountains, much of this fire burned at moderate severity.

Marla Brooks (Bandelier National Monument) has been directing the cutting in some of the areas along Highway 4 that had been previously thinned. Marla also noted that the live fuel moistures have increased to greater than 100 percent.

Bill Gall (Los Alamos Area Organization, DOE) announced that LANL Emergency Management and Response has received two foam mini-tankers that will be stationed at TA-49. Bill also noted that two units from Los Alamos were called on to assist with the recent bosque fires in Albuquerque.

Manny L,Esperance (Emergency Management and Response, LANL) reported through the LANL Fire Danger Estimate system that critical fire weather is expected through the Fourth of July weekend. The current fire danger level is extreme. At LANL, 1-hour and 10-hour fuels moistures are less than 3 percent. The dead 1000-hour fuel moistures are 6 percent to 10 percent.

According to the LANL Weather Machine (http://weather.lanl.gov) there has been a drying trend during the past two weeks. Approximately 0.71 inches of rain have fallen at the TA-6 weather tower during the month of June 2003. However, only 0.01 inch has fallen between June 20 and July 5. During this sixteen-day time period, 1882 lightning strikes have been recorded at TA-6. Daily average windspeeds at 12 meters above ground level have typically been 7 miles per hour to 8 miles per hour. The maximum wind speed, 41.9 miles per hour, occurred on July 5. During this same time period at TA-6, the maximum temperature, 92.5 degrees, was on July 2, and the minimum relative humidity, 7 percent, occurred on June 23 and June 29. The minimum relative humidity levels since July 2 have ranged from 8 percent to 9 percent.

The next IWMT meeting will be at 9:30 AM on Wednesday, July 16, at TA-21, Building 210 in the RRES-ECO Conference Room (142). The IWMT meets every other week and these meetings are open to the public. Contact Randy Balice (balice@lanl.gov, 665-1270) for further information, or to get on the distribution list for these meeting notes.